

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by the Chief Officer, Housing and Employability****Housing and Communities Committee: 24 August 2022**

Subject: Scottish Social Housing Charter/Regulation of Social Housing in Scotland Annual Update Report**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** This purpose of this report is to provide the Housing and Communities Committee with West Dunbartonshire Council's annual progress report on meeting the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that the Housing and Communities Committee:

- (i) Notes the contents of this report recognising the ongoing impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on 2021/22 performance and the key areas of focus for the Housing Improvement Board during 2022/23 outlined at 4.19 of this report; and
- (ii) Agrees that a further progress report on the Scottish Social Housing Charter be submitted to the November 2022 meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee. This report will include detailed benchmarking performance information against all local authorities in Scotland highlighting the impacts of the pandemic on housing and homelessness services across Scotland.

3. Background

- 3.1** The Scottish Government's first Social Housing Charter (SSHC) came into force in April 2012 and this was reviewed during 2016. A revised Charter was subsequently approved by the Scottish Parliament and came into effect in April 2017.
- 3.2** The purpose of the SSHC is to help improve the quality and value of the services that social landlords provide by:
- Stating clearly what tenants and other customers can expect from social landlords and helping them to hold landlords to account;
 - Focusing the efforts of social landlords on achieving outcomes that matter to their customers; and
 - Providing the basis for the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) to assess and report on how well landlords are performing.

3.3 A revised Regulatory Framework and reporting timetable for the SSHC came into effect on 1st April 2019 is shown below:

When	Who	What
Throughout year	Housing Development/Tenant Representatives	Assess performance against the Charter Outcomes
May each year	Housing Development	Submission of Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) to Scottish Housing Regulator
August each year	Scottish Housing Regulator	Publishes a report about each social landlord with key data from its ARC on their website
October each year	Convener of Housing and Communities Committee	Submission of Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) to the Scottish Housing Regulator
October each year	Housing Development	Publication of annual Charter Performance Report for tenants and other customers
by April each year	Scottish Housing Regulator	Publishes an Engagement Plan for each landlord, highlighting areas where they are seeking further assurance, based on performance against Charter Indicators and outcomes
by April each year	Scottish Housing Regulator	SHR will publish a report on the analysis of the sector's performance in achieving the Charter

3.4 The main changes introduced as part of this revised framework were the introduction of an Annual Assurance Statement (AAS), which needs to be submitted to the SHR by the end of October each year, and also the introduction of an Engagement Plan published by the SHR for every social landlord, which is based on information provided as part of our Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) which measures performance against the Charter indicators and outcomes.

3.5 On the 6 August 2014, Members of the Housing and Communities Committee agreed that twice yearly reports be provided as follows:

- August Committee - Scottish Social Housing Charter Annual Update Report; and
- November Committee - Scottish Social Housing Charter Annual Benchmarking Report and Mid-Year Progress Report – (April-September).

4. Main Issues













4.1 The key areas of focus in relation to the SSHC are as follows:

- An assessment of our progress in relation to achieving the Charter Outcomes;
- Production and publication of an Annual Charter Performance Report for tenants and other customers;
- Submission of an AAS to the SHR;

- The development of effective tenant scrutiny arrangements in conjunction with tenants and other customers; and
- The publication by the Regulator of an Engagement Plan for every social landlord.

Assessment of Performance against the Charter Outcomes
Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) and Landlord Report

- 4.2** West Dunbartonshire Council has successfully submitted our ARC to the SHR within the timescale outlined in the Regulatory Framework. This process included both internal and external validation processes. The Housing Service engaged with the Scottish Housing Network (SHN) in terms of a robust external validation of our data.
- 4.3** The SHR uses these Charter Performance Indicators, alongside data relating to homelessness submitted to the Scottish Government, to monitor the delivery of housing and homelessness services of all social landlords against the Charter outcomes and standards. A copy of the full list of indicators can be accessed via the link included as part of the background papers.
- 4.4** The SHR is due to publish a Landlord Report on their website for each Scottish social housing landlord at the end of August 2022 and this report will contain key data from the ARC (18 key indicators) and will compare our performance with a Scottish average figure across all social housing landlords operating in Scotland.
- 4.5** Performance in 2021/22 against those 18 key indicators and an additional 12 indicators that our tenants and customers have informed us are important to them are outlined in the table below.

Table Key Index					
	Annual Target Achieved		Positive Performance Trend		
	Annual Target Almost Achieved (within agreed parameter)		Negative Performance Trend		
	Annual Target Not Achieved		No change from previous year		
Overall Satisfaction					
Indicator Description	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2021/22 Target	Trend	Target met
% of tenants satisfied with the overall service	78.5%*	78.5%*	78.5%		
Communication					
Indicator Description	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2021/22 Target	Trend	Target met
average time in working days to respond in full to complaint - Stage 1	10.65 days	11.86 days	5 days		
average time in working days to respond in full to complaint - Stage 2	35.97 days	29.95 days	20 days		

% of tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed about their services	85.7%*	85.7%*	85.7%		
Participation					
Indicator Description	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2021/22 Target	Trend	Target met
% of tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to participate in decision making process	83.9%*	83.9%*	83.9%		
Quality of Housing					
Indicator Description	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2021/22 Target	Trend	Target met
% of stock meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)	82.84%	18.17%	86.15%		
% of existing tenants satisfied with the quality of their home	76.54%*	76.54%*	76.54%		
Repairs and maintenance					
Indicator Description	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2021/22 Target	Trend	Target met
Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs	6.14 hours	5.81 hours	4 hours		
Average length of time to complete non-emergency repairs	6.76 days	10.16 days	7 days		
% of reactive repairs carried out in the last year Right First Time	89.76%	86.49%	90%		
% of repairs appointments kept	94.87%	89.72%	93%		
How many times in the reporting year did you not meet your statutory obligation to complete a gas safety check within 12 months of a gas appliance being fitted or last checked	215	0	0		
% of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service	80.50%	87.7%	84%		
Estate management, Antisocial behaviour					
Indicator Description	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2021/22 Target	Trend	Target met
% of Anti Social Behaviour cases resolved within locally agreed targets	92.83%	98.08%	93%		
% of tenants satisfied with the landlord's contribution to the management of the neighbourhood they live in.	78.53%*	78.53%*	78.53%		
Access to housing					
Indicator Description	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2021/22 Target	Trend	Target met
% of tenancy offers refused	46.61%	49.19%	42%		
Tenancy sustainment					
Indicator Description	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2021/22 Target	Trend	Target met
% of new tenancies sustained for more than a year	91.55%	94.59%	92%		
The average time to complete medical adaptations	123.25 days	107.84 days	60 days		

Homelessness					
Indicator Description	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2021/22 Target	Trend	Target met
Incidences of homelessness in West Dunbartonshire	1021	1203	1072		
% of homeless cases with decision within 28 days of presentation	99.6%	99.6%	95%		
% of all homeless cases re-assessed within 12 months (repeat homeless)	5.4%	5.3%	5%		
% of households requiring temporary accommodation to whom an offer was made	100%	100%	100%		
% satisfied with the quality of temporary accommodation	88.2%	86%	89%		
Value for Money – Rent Collection					
Indicator Description	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2021/22 Target	Trend	Target met
Rent collected as a % of total rent due	98.88%	98.39%	98%		
Gross rent arrears as a % of rent due	10.35%	9.24%	10.35%		
% of tenants who feel that the rent for their property represents good value for money	77.05%*	77.05%*	77.05%		
Value for Money – Void Management					
Indicator Description	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2021/22 Target	Trend	Target met
% of rent due lost through properties being empty	1.20%	1.29%	0.88%		
Average length of time taken to re-let properties	56.14 days	45.77 days	25 days		
% of tenants satisfied with the standard of their home moving in	79.65%	90.5%	87%		
Gypsy Travellers					
Indicator Description	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2021/22 Target	Trend	Target met
% of Gypsy Travellers satisfied with the landlords management of site	91.7%	91.7%	90%		

*Value from Tenant Satisfaction Survey carried out in 2019/20, next survey is planned 2022/23. Satisfaction levels must be from within a 3 year period

4.6 Performance in 2021/22 continued to be affected by the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout the year this significantly impacted on service delivery and performance in areas such as repairs/maintenance, void management, the completion of medical adaptations. Of the 30 key indicators outlined above, 16 met the annual target set (the same as in 2020/21), with another 5 narrowly missing this target. Overall this translates to 70% of these key indicators either meeting or almost achieving target (up from 69% in 2020/21).

4.7 During 2021/22, the Housing Improvement Board (HIB) has monitored closely key work-streams aimed at improving key areas of service delivery where performance was not where we wished it to be:-

- rent collection/arrears;

- time taken to carry out medical adaptations;
- complaints response times.

The HIB also decided to monitor SHQS compliance and services for people who are experiencing homelessness. Progress around these areas is outlined below.

Rent Collection/Arrears

- 4.8** The target agreed with Revenues and Benefits for 2021/22 for maintaining the level of rent arrears at 10.35% of the rent due was met, with arrears reducing to 9.24% (prior to write-offs).
- 4.9** The target for collecting 98% of all rent due was also met, with 98.39% of all rent due reported. Whilst benchmarking data is not yet available from the SHR both these figures are likely to remain below the Scottish average figure.

Time taken to carry out medical adaptations

- 4.10** Performance in 2021/22 continued to be affected by the previous restrictions in activity due to Covid-19 and the backlog that this created. Activity in terms of carrying out medical adaptations has now resumed. The number of medical adaptations completed increased from 119 in 2020/21, to 313 in 2021/22, with the number of households waiting for adaptations to be completed reducing from 134 at the end of 2020/21, to 49 at the end of 2021/22.
- 4.11** Completing a large number of legacy applications which had been on the list for some time because of the impacts of the pandemic, affected the overall average days taken to complete medical adaptations which was 107.84 days. This remains above our target but was an improvement from 123.25 days in 2020/21. Both internal and external resources are being utilised to increase completions and further improve performance during 2022/23.

Complaints response times

- 4.12** The average time taken to respond to Stage 1 complaints increased slightly from 10.65 days to 11.86 days (against a 5 day target), though the average time taken to respond to Stage 2 complaints reduced from 35.97 days to 29.95 days (against a 20 days target).
- 4.13** Whilst performance can be partly explained by the increased volume of complaints received during the Covid-19 pandemic, there is scope for improvement in this area. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel's last exercise looked at this area and made a number of recommendations which are now being implemented and we would hope to see significant improvement in this area.

SHQS compliance

- 4.14** This year has seen an increase in our SHQS failures. The key contributing factor is due to the new requirement around Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICRs) programme not being completed as planned by the end of March 2022. The programme has been delayed due to the Covid-19

restrictions and the wider consequences of these impacting on internal and external resource availability to deliver the programme as planned.

- 4.15** While we have since secured additional resource to deliver the programme as early as possible this did not significantly reduce SHQS failures before 31st March 2022. To ensure the programme continues to accelerate all our housing stock to full compliance in terms of EICRs we are undertaking proactive communications with tenants to maximise access to complete the required inspection reports.

Services for people experiencing homelessness

- 4.16** During 2021/22 we spoke to the SHR to provide further information and assurance around our homelessness services. There has been a 14% increase in homeless presentations during 2021/22 with a total of 1203 presentations compared to 1053 in 2020/21. The main reasons for the increase in presentations have been as a result of relationship breakdown, inclusive of a significant increase in presentations as a result of domestic abuse. A significant increase in approaches to the Housing Options Service for assistance has also contributed to the rise in applications.
- 4.17** Despite a significant increase in presentations, performance around key indicators remains excellent with 99.6% of all homeless applications being assessed within 28 day target time (this equates to only 5 cases not being assessed within target during 2021/22, these were all complex cases involving other public agencies) and instances of repeat homelessness remaining relatively low at 5.3% (this represents 54 repeat cases in the year. Analysis of all repeat cases of homelessness is carried out on an ongoing basis and key drivers are when an applicant has lost contact with the service and then re-presents or when there has been a relationship breakdown and further assistance is required).
- 4.18** The rise in applications and slowing down of letting activity will impact on the number of homeless households requiring to be rehoused and on the length of time spent in temporary accommodation and the progress we are making in terms of delivering the outcomes outlined in our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) is being provided in a separate report to the August 2022 Housing and Communities Committee.

Key areas of focus for the HIB during 2022/23

- 4.19** At the meeting of the HIB on 30 May 2022, annual performance was discussed and it was agreed that in addition to quarterly performance reports covering the whole service, the HIB would monitor key work-streams aimed at driving improvements and monitoring closely the following areas:
- SHQS compliance;
 - Void management;
 - Services for people who are homeless;
 - Rent collection/arrears; and

- Complaints response times.
- 4.20** A comprehensive assessment of performance against the Charter Outcomes has been undertaken and informs a series of actions aimed at recovery and to drive continued improvement. This wider Charter Improvement Plan was approved at the July 2022 meeting of the HIB.
- 4.21** Annual benchmarking data is due to be published by the SHR by the end of August 2022 and the HIB will review annual targets for 2022/23 which challenge the housing and homelessness service to meet their ambition to be one of Scotland's top performing landlord organisations.

Production and publication of Annual Charter Performance Report

- 4.22** The SHR requires all social landlords to produce an Annual Charter Performance Report for their tenants and other customers no later than 31 October each year.
- 4.23** The Regulator states that it should include:
- An assessment of performance in delivering the Charter Outcomes;
 - Relevant comparisons – with previous years, other landlords and national performance; and
 - How and when the landlord intends to address areas for improvement.
- 4.24** In preparation for our first report in 2014, a working group of tenants and officers was established and successfully:
- Agreed how tenants wished to be involved;
 - Agreed which indicators will feature in the report; and
 - Agreed the best style and format to ensure that the report is user friendly and easy to understand.
- 4.25** Further engagement was carried out with tenant representatives during August and September 2020 to review and update this report, in line with the revised Charter coming into effect. This consultation influenced the style, content and format of our Annual Charter Performance Report and also the update of the Service Standards that are in place across housing services and which are reported regularly to tenants and other service users (via website and insert with Housing News).
- 4.26** The narrative in the report is based on the annual self-assessment exercise of our performance and the report will be published online, with a summary being sent to every tenant with the winter edition of the Housing News. The full report will be sent to tenants groups and interested tenants, partner organisations and elected members.

Annual Assurance Statement (AAS)

- 4.27** The AAS requires landlords to state they are meeting regulatory requirements and that they are compliant with the relevant regulatory standards, legal requirements and statutory guidance relevant to the sector.
- 4.28** We are carrying out a process of reviewing and updating our AAS which takes account of the risks posed by, and impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. As outlined in the SHR guidance, it will be a short, succinct document, in a simple format and will highlight any areas of non-compliance and actions being taken to address these.
- 4.29** The central aspect of the AAS is that the Committee has been provided with the necessary assurance in terms of information and evidence where required, to support the content of the AAS.
- 4.30** A wide range of arrangements are in place to ensure that we meet our regulatory and statutory obligations and to provide members of the Committee with the assurance required.
- 4.31** An information session will be planned for September 2022 for the Housing and Communities Convener and Vice Convener, to provide an overview of the Regulatory Framework, with detail around how they can be assured that we have properly assessed and can evidence compliance with our regulatory and statutory obligations and to highlight any areas of non-compliance being reported.
- 4.32** The AAS will be signed by the Convener of the Committee and submitted to the SHR as per the regulatory requirement. As per the SHR guidance, the AAS will then be published to ensure that it is accessible to tenants and other customers.

Tenant Scrutiny Arrangements

- 4.33** The statutory regulatory framework for housing and homelessness services demands that tenants are involved in scrutinising landlords' performance against the Charter and requires that:
- The form of involvement has been agreed with tenants;
 - Involvement is effective and meaningful and that tenants have a real say in assessment of performance;
 - The approach is publicised to tenants; and
 - Landlords' can demonstrate the agreed approach was actually implemented.
- 4.34** Developing effective tenant scrutiny is therefore a challenging process, however following support from the Scottish Government's "Stepping Up to Scrutiny" training programme in which elected members took part, these requirements were successfully met and in November 2014 the Housing and Communities Committee approved the establishment of our Tenant Scrutiny Panel with clear terms of reference.

4.35 The Scrutiny Panel has subsequently carried out the following scrutiny exercises:

- 2014/15 looking at our Anti-Social Behaviour Service;
- 2015/16 looking at our Repairs Service;
- 2016/17 looking at tenancy sustainment, specifically the new tenant visit process;
- 2017/18 looking at SHQS compliance, specifically the number and reasons that properties that are held in abeyance;
- 2018/19 looking at the timescales taken to complete medical adaptations; and
- 2020/21 look at the complaints process and time taken to respond to complaints.

4.36 All of the recommendations made in the Panel's first 6 reports were approved by the HIB and progress in terms of implementing these are a standing agenda item at the monthly meetings of the HIB.

4.37 Following our 2021/22 ARC submission the Scrutiny Panel have been briefed in terms of our latest performance information and Charter Improvement Plan and will use this information to agree the focus their activity during 2022/23.

4.38 The WDTR0 continue to be heavily involved in the scrutiny of the Housing Service and the formation of the Joint Rent Group comprising of tenants, Council officers and the Convener of the Housing and Communities Committee, looking at the rent setting process and the guidance in relation to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a further mechanism in ensuring the Housing Service provides best value for current and future tenants.

Engagement Plan

4.39 The SHR continues to operate a risk based approach to inform its engagement with social landlords. As part of the Regulatory Framework the Regulator now publishes an Engagement Plan for all landlords based on our ARC submission and our homelessness submissions to the Scottish Government.

4.40 Our most recent Engagement Plan published on 31 March 2022 states that the SHR will engage with the Council about our services for people who are homeless and also engage with the Council in relation to tenant satisfaction, complaints handling and rent arrears.

4.41 The high social and political focus on homelessness within Scotland, alongside the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, has resulted in all of Scottish local authorities being required to provide further information in relation to services to homeless people.

4.42 The other areas identified were based on a review and comparison of 2020/21 performance information of all social landlords to identify the weakest

performing landlords. A copy of our current Engagement Plan is available on our website and also the Scottish Housing Regulators website.

5. People Implications

5.1 None.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial or procurement implications in relation to this report. The improvement plan developed from the Charter self-assessment exercise will be delivered from within existing budgets. These are detailed in the Resources section of the Housing and Employability Delivery Plan being submitted to the Housing and Communities Committee in August 2022.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 There is a risk that failure to respond appropriately to the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter would attract an adverse reaction from the Scottish Housing Regulator and may have wider consequences for the Council in the context of Best Value.

7.2 At the time of writing we expect our next Engagement Plan to be published in March 2023.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 Equalities legislation requires that new or significantly changing policies or services and financial decisions should be subject to an assessment of their impact on the wellbeing of certain groups of people. The recommendations within this report do not alter any existing policy or pattern of service delivery and so is not considered to require an equalities impact assessment.

9. Consultation

9.1 The Council has in place a well-established and proactive tenants and residents organisational structure. The WDTR meet with the Council (co-chaired by the Convener of the Housing and Communities Committee) on a bi-monthly basis to discuss all issues relating to the Housing Service.

9.2 There remains a strong appetite among tenants and customers to continue to participate actively to improve housing services in West Dunbartonshire. This is reflected in the successful partnership approach adopted to develop the Charter Performance Report and the on-going activities of the WDTR and the West Dunbartonshire Scrutiny Panel.

9.3 The Council is committed to ensure consultation continues and will support arrangements to increase tenant scrutiny activities and assess our performance in line with the requirements under the Scottish Social Housing Charter and the new regulatory framework introduced by the Scottish Housing Regulator. Our approach was again commended via an external validation exercise by TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) Scotland which

awarded West Dunbartonshire Council, a Gold Accreditation for excellence in tenant participation (the highest available).

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1 Having considered the Council's strategic priorities, this report contributes significantly to all five strategic priorities and specifically to improve local housing and environmentally sustainable infrastructure.

Peter Barry
Chief Officer, Housing & Employability
Date: 9 August 2022

Person to Contact: John Kerr – Housing Development and Homelessness Manager, Housing Development and Homelessness Team, Housing and Employability, telephone: 07793717981, email: john.kerr@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendices: None

Background Papers: West Dunbartonshire Council, Annual Assurance Statement 2020/21, October 2021
[West Dunbartonshire Council | Scottish Housing Regulator](#)

AAS Assessment of compliance toolkit 2021, West Dunbartonshire Council, October 2021

West Dunbartonshire Council's Engagement Plan, Scottish Housing Regulator, 31 March 2021
[Engagement plan from 31 March 2022 to 31 March 2023 | Scottish Housing Regulator](#)

The Scottish Social Housing Charter: Indicators and Context Information, Scottish Housing Regulator
<https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/national-reports/national-reports-on-the-scottish-social-housing-charter/about-the-scottish-social-housing-charter>

Scottish Housing Regulator, Landlord Report 2020/21 West Dunbartonshire Council
[Landlord Report | West Dunbartonshire Council \(west-dunbarton.gov.uk\)](#)

Annual Charter Performance Report for Tenants and other Customers 2020/21, West Dunbartonshire Council, October 2021
[Charter Performance Report | West Dunbartonshire Council \(west-dunbarton.gov.uk\)](#)

West Dunbartonshire Council Scottish Social Housing Charter
Self-Assessment Improvement Plan

West Dunbartonshire Tenant Participation Strategy 2021-2024
“Involving You”

Scottish Social Housing Charter/Regulation of Social Housing
in Scotland \progress Report,
Report by Executive Director of Infrastructure and
Regeneration, Housing and Communities Committee,
3 November 2021

West Dunbartonshire Scrutiny Panel, Report to the Housing
Improvement Board October 2021, Scrutiny Exercise:
Complaints handling

West Dunbartonshire Scrutiny Panel, Report to the Housing
Improvement Board October 2020, Scrutiny Exercise: Medical
adaptations

West Dunbartonshire Scrutiny Panel, Report to the Housing
Improvement Board March 2018, Scrutiny Exercise: SHQS,
properties held in abeyance

West Dunbartonshire Scrutiny Panel, Report to the Housing
Improvement Board October 2017, Scrutiny Exercise:
Tenancy Sustainment, New Tenant Visits

West Dunbartonshire Scrutiny Panel, Report to the Housing
Improvement Board June 2016, Scrutiny Exercise: Repairs
and Maintenance

West Dunbartonshire Scrutiny Panel, Report to the Housing
Management Team March 2015, Scrutiny Exercise: Anti-
social behaviour

Wards Affected: All